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ABSTRACT

The special education referral-placement phenomenon has reached crisis proportions in New York City. Problems affecting effectiveness of approaches include: inadequate state and federal funding; fragmented decision making; lack of uniform terminology and standardized criteria for special education; lack of training, support services, and resources for teachers; teacher attitudes; lack of trained special education teachers; and conflict between involved special interest groups. A unified system of identification, referral, and placement in special education and mainstreaming programs is needed, involving a network of regular classroom teachers, special education teachers, state administrators, university faculty, and business and community representatives. Such a system should also encompass prevention programs, training and support systems for regular and special education teachers, programs starting at the preschool level and continuing through the university level, and cooperation among special education and regular teachers. Such a program exists at one elementary school in the Bronx, where students are regularly assessed and placed into programs according to grade and ability level. Support services provided by the school include guidance for mainstreamed students, resource rooms, speech therapy, remedial reading and mathematics instruction, school volunteers from among parents and community members, and Board of Education resources in the form of consultant services and help for individual teachers. (CB)

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SPECIAL EDUCATION: A CHALLENGE FOR THE 80's

GERALDINE CHAPEY

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Panel on Special Education: A Challenge for the 80's

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Appendix

A Model for an Effective Elementary School
ANNA PETSCHE

Cover by
SHEILA STEMBER

PREFACE

This paper has been prepared in response to an invitation from Carol Poteat, President of the New York City Chapter of the National Council of Administrative Women in Education from 1982-1984. The invitation suggested that the panel study the crisis in special education, a major issue that has attracted increasing concern and attention among educators and the public. The purpose of the report was to attempt to clarify the basis for the concern and to suggest future directions.

The panel for this project represents special and regular educators on every level, - elementary, secondary and university. The report reflects the diverse experience of panel members and is the result of their study and discussion. During the panel's six month term a questionnaire was developed and distributed to representative groups of teachers for their input; in addition a growing body of literature related to the critical issues of Special Education was reviewed. The chair of the panel is the principal author of the report.

This project has received the enthusiastic support, encouragement, and endorsement of Patricia Romandetto, current President, New York City Administrative Women in Education under whose aegis this report has been finalized.

GERALDINE CHAPEY

ST. JOHN'S UNIVERSITY

CHAIR

Special Education: A Challenge for the 80's

ABSTRACT

The special education referral-placement phenomenon has reached acute proportions nationally; legislative and court mandates have been overly prescriptive, confusing and burdensome.

The present paper developed by a New York City Administrative Women in Education Panel examines the current crisis in Special Education in New York City and suggests some alternatives. The existing fragmented approach is divisive, promoting a 'two-box' approach to educational decision making and encouraging regular educators and special educators to compete for scarce resources at the cost of effective educational programs. Efforts should not be squandered in attempting to identify scapegoats for the current problem. Rather, it is suggested that we set about using a common sense approach and working together to resolve the current dilemma.

As we project for the future, our plan calls for a comprehensive integrated collegial approach to system change. Educational policy makers at the highest level are urged to provide leadership in establishing a unified systems approach to meet the unique needs of all regular and special education students. An aggressive program of prevention should be initiated without delay. Staff development must be provided to assist regular teachers, at the secondary and at the elementary level, to provide for and cope with individual students' special needs. Regional centers with interdisciplinary courses and services should be established to provide multi-tiered programs of career and college preparation for students who wish to pursue special areas of interest but who cannot benefit from existing programs. A new expanded operational relationship with other community service agencies and with colleges is also advanced.

INDICATORS OF THE PROBLEM

The historic Civil Rights Law for the Handicapped,[1] P.L. 94-142, and the New York City budget crisis struck the City simultaneously in 1975 and left an educational system unable to cope with the resultant chaos. The dimensions of this problem have been amply documented in budget hearings and professional meetings.

Some of the major problems contributing to the present situation are identified as follows:

1. From the beginning an overriding problem for policy makers was the inadequate State and Federal funding required to implement the special education mandates of P.L. 94-142.

2. The law was implemented at a frenetic pace to meet unreal timetables; decisions were fragmented; authority was overlapping. Standard operating procedures were not in place for the subsequent dramatic and sudden increase in special education.

3. Uniform terminology and standardized criteria for special education were wanting. The impulsive nature of the passage of this landmark legislation was indicated also by the ambiguity and confusion of its wording and the interpretation of it. One example of this was the definition and complicated formula for identifying a Learning Disability. The immediate national outcry this created prompted a reversal in the directive and a revised formula appeared in the Federal[2] Register of November 1976. However, the criteria for this category, Learning Disability, remains vague, plaguing[3] diagnosticians and program specialists to this day. For example, a child in one

district might be labeled Learning Disabled and the same child in another district Emotionally Handicapped. Nationally, too, the category, Learning Disabled, has become a wastebasket term for any child with a wide range of learning problems from profound to mild.[4]

Considering the present overall state of the art in assessment, classification and decision making practices, it is not surprising to continue to find inconsistencies and variations in terminology and in interpretation.[5][6]

4. When the legislative mandates were first implemented, more than 75% of the regular teachers strongly resisted mainstreaming[7] service since they were not equipped with materials, training or support services to meet the special needs of the new special education population. Almost simultaneously[8] the dramatic budget cuts, beginning in 1975 dismantled the guidance support system for regular education leaving in place inadequate measures for counseling parents, children and teachers and for preventing the excessive referral and placement of children with minor problems into special education.

5. A wide gap exists between the perceptions[9] and the expectations of regular and special educators; regular educators view special education as a panacea for all behavior and/or learning problems and feel overwhelmed in the regular class with large registers and no support personnel. Related services staff, on the other hand, have a limited view of the reality of what can be accomplished in a regular class with registers of over 30 children.

The imbalance created by legislation and the courts have exacerbated the 'two-box' [10] system or the 'we-they' concept, that is, regular education versus special education.

6. In addition, triple funding [11] for special education students provides a strong incentive for referrals and for holding students in special education settings. Premium funding disappears when a student is returned to regular class. The percent of return of students to regular class is therefore low. Further, rigid requirements [12] for entrance and exit in special education provide no flexibility for temporary placement, trial or experimentation.

7. An absence of preparation time for mandated conferences with parents and with specialists heightens teacher and administrator stress, seriously impeding the smooth functioning of education and dangerously jeopardizing the overall quality of education.

8. Trained special education teachers and supervisors to meet the great increase in the special education population were unavailable. License requirements were waived to meet legislative and court demands. As a matter of record the practice of waiving special education license requirements continues through 1985.

9. A tug of war between special interest groups pervaded early planning sessions with one parent group competing with the other for power at the expense of sound educational policy.

THE SPECIAL EDUCATION POPULATION

Special education is a global term which does not address the wide range of abilities and needs of the individuals in this population. Special education pupils are certainly as diverse as those in the regular education population program.

When analyzing the needs of this "special" population, three major groups emerge:

1. The severely handicapped who will always require special facilities in segregated situations, for example the profoundly retarded, the multiply handicapped and the autistic. Separate policies should be developed to meet the unique needs of this low incidence population.

2. Children who have been evaluated as requiring special education in self contained classes plus mainstream opportunities; such children have potential for being decertified and returned to the regular education program.

3. Individuals who remain in regular education classes and are provided support services such as the resource room, speech therapy or counseling.

For the purpose of this paper, attention is drawn to groups two and three since it is problems related to these groups that have brought about the present crisis in special education; the excessive referral rate, the rising percentage of children who are subsequently placed in special education and the almost total absence of movement in returning children to regular classes.

PRESENT CONCERNS

Several questions arise from the present crisis:

- How can we eliminate the cleavage of the two-box system: special education and regular education?

- How can we change the unreal expectations of regular educators and special educators?

- What criteria should be used to determine just who should be in special education?

- What criteria should be used to identify model programs in the districts and disseminate them for implementation?

- How can we prevent teachers and parents from making inappropriate referrals to special education?

- Are all of the placements into self contained classes necessary?

- Have classroom teachers been trained to modify curriculum and materials, to utilize school resources such as corrective reading, guidance services, appropriate aids and techniques in working with children before referring them to the Committee on the Handicapped?

  Are such services and resources available to teachers?

- Are classes presently of such size that they do not permit teachers to individualize education?

- What competencies should regular and special educators have in order to provide quality

services for children with learning and behavior problems?

- Are assessment tools sufficiently refined to differentiate between learning problems?
- Why are so few children decertified?
- How can we improve the rate of return of special education students to regular education?
- How can time be allocated to permit regular and special education teachers, support staff and parents to confer in a meaningful way?
- How can we reach parents to join educators as true partners recognizing their responsibilities as well as their rights?
- How can we effectively and efficiently involve the public, legislators, business and the courts in the process of providing quality educational services for regular and special education?

CONCLUSIONS

The Good News

Despite the current massive problems, the legal clout of P.L. 94-142 and Section 504 brought spectacular change in the acceptance of the handicapped in our society.

- Large numbers of children, never served or underserved have been identified.[13]
- Schools and public buildings have modified architectural barriers permitting greater access to programs and facilities.[14]

- Reluctant principals and teachers have opened their doors to children with special needs. A recent New York City Administrative Women in Education survey indicated that classes for the handicapped are welcomed in 70% of our schools, up from 48% in 1977. Mainstreaming has become widespread: about 75% of the teachers in high schools indicated they are now willing to accept a handicapped child in class; and almost 60% of the elementary school teachers responded "yes" when asked if they would willingly accept a handicapped child in class.[15]

- Training of regular teachers and administrators to meet the needs of special children has significantly increased.[16]

- Innovative materials and aids for enhancing the ability of special children to function have proliferated.[17]

HOWEVER, as in the case of any monumental change, the pendulum has swung too far. The time has come to take a close look at what impact programs in special education have had on the entire educational system.

WARNING; let us not squander our efforts in identifying scapegoats for current problems. Parents and educators alike want all America's children to have the greatest opportunity to develop their individual potential. Let us now use our vision of the future to think of new alternative ways to accomplish this. Let us set about putting some of the good common sense that made America such a great country and work together to resolve our dilemma.

DISCUSSION

Before attempting to resolve the present problem, consideration by all constituencies must be given to two basic issues:

1. To meet the challenge before us, educators must develop a comprehensive educational policy, based on a sound shared philosophy.[18] Special education and regular education must be viewed as integral parts of the total educational continuum and not as separate educational entities or a 'two-box' system.

2. It is suggested that <u>prevention</u> should be the added new dimension to the professional responsibility of educators. Prevention as a solid philosophy for early identification and intervention has, at least for the record, been declared a national public policy and set forth in the HEW reports of 1977 and 1978.

Prevention efforts[19] are aimed at eliminating the factors which interfere with the normal development of skills; focus is on changing thinking which perpetuates the 'illness model' and substituting thinking which encourages a 'wellness model'.

Research is also replete with studies documenting the secondary and tertiary psychological problems arising from lack of early identification and counseling.[20] While professionals, in general, are aware of the need and the value of prevention, they have lagged in actually implementing this policy; little has been done in the way of systematic, specific action to organize existing information and develop an action plan.

An additional important consideration is the fact that prevention programs can contribute substantially to the <u>cost containment</u> of services to the disabled. As an example, the Wisconsin Department of Health and

Social Services developed a series of comparative cost figures for prevention versus treatment of mental retardation and related disorders. According to the report, prevention programs through mutual support groups and school programs were cost effective; in one case alone it was predicted that $5,000 as an initial investment in prevention would save $50,000 in treatment costs.[21]

ACTION PLAN

Problem Solving in a Time of Change

Only an aggressive system-wide action plan and agenda can hope for success. The present chaotic situation did not occur overnight and cannot be resolved with the stroke of a pen. Resolution of it must go beyond educational circles. However, prior to lobbying or seeking to involve the broader community, educators must set their own houses in order.

Major reform in education calls for short and long term programs and requires immediate, dedicated and energetic action. Short term objectives should obviously, address the most urgent concerns.

LONG RANGE PLAN

The task of success does not fall to educators alone. Educators must expand their vision of the change process and work as partners in the political process with governors, legislators and the courts to preclude the disastrous separation which has led to the unreal demands made on educators in recent years. Educators should inform, persuade, motivate and mobilize other sectors of the community since knowledge and information are the raw material of policy and decision making.

A comprehensive long range plan for education reform should be founded on a firm network of informed constituents: regular educators, special educators, state administrators, university faculty, business and community representatives, providing for diversity of opinion but joined by unity of purpose.[22]

- Commitment at the highest level is an essential ingredient: the chancellor and superintendent, state officials and national leaders.

- Strong educational leadership is necessary to mobilize energy, to generate understanding, enthusiasm, vitality.

- Clarity regarding the mission of the schools must be established; schools should not overlap or duplicate the services other agencies can provide more effectively and cooperatively develop guidelines:
  - What the school should be doing?
  - What other agencies should be doing?

- A systems approach[23] to change will establish common goals for regular and special educators. Priorities would be identified, timetables would be set. The plan would be communicated to both regular and special educators for discussion, modification and implementation.

- Closer operational ties with university and college preservice and inservice training programs would significantly reduce the need to continue to hire special education personnel without the essential qualifications and competencies.

- Administrators and teachers of regular education must assume responsibility for <u>all</u> children who enter Kindergarten in the regular education program right up through the end of high school.

- Immediate attention must be given to standardizing operating procedures and to using uniform terminology.

- On each level, - elementary, junior and senior high school - regions and districts should coordinate efforts by targeting selected schools which can provide a wide range of specialized programs and services for regular and special education students in barrier free schools. Specialized services might include strong interdisciplinary support teams, technological equipment and training, programs for the multiple handicapped, gifted and talented. Targeted schools would provide a continuum of flexible services available to regular and to special education students alike.

Regional arrangements should also include:

- Preschool services, particularly for the 3-5 year old and to the 0-3, where needed.[24]

- Bilingual programs and services.

- Links with community groups for handicapped youths, over 21, who are 'aging-out' of school programs.

- Criteria must be developed for identifying model practices and programs. Such models should then be shared and implemented widely.

- Decision making should occur nearest to the point of action, this is, the schools. Planners must acknowledge that change takes place through people and to be effective, change must involve all the people who will be affected in implementing the change. The talents, expertise and experience of teachers

and administrators must be utilized in problem solving. Quality circles should be developed on a pilot basis. "Give educators respect for their ability to run the schools and they will take pride in succeeding." 25

- Teacher training and supervision must be redirected and strengthened; critical competencies needed by regular and special educators must be identified; only those preservice and inservice courses appropriate for resolving problem areas should be accepted for appointment or promotion.

The role of the regular teacher is changing; new skills and new strategies are required:

- The use of language in the classroom for children whose ability to interpret subtleties and inferences is limited.
- The ability to guide the development of higher order thinking by connecting a child to his own personal environment and to his own feelings.
- A multi-sensory, behavior modification approach for children with particular learning and behavior problems.
- The development of work related skills at an early age.
- The use of technology in the classroom.
- A problem solving approach to sensitivity training for regular and special educators related to specific actual cases.
- Parent conferencing and counseling.

On an ongoing basis educators must communicate with the community about what is happening in the schools; they must go to the Kiwanis, the Rotary and the Chamber of Commerce to tell about success, pockets of excellence, programs that work and students who achieve. They must re-establish confidence in education and in educators. All teachers and administrators must learn the techniques of the political process and lobby with their own legislators to bring about change. The old adage, 'Let the other guy take care of that' no longer works.

ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

On the elementary level school programs should place strong emphasis on PREVENTION.[26] Administrators and teachers must be given the tools they need by:

- Establishing a strong early childhood program.
- Reducing class size, particularly in the lower grades.
- Encouraging early identification and intervention for high risk kindergarten children precluding special education labelling and placement and hoping to reduce complex problems in the upper grades.
- Providing a transition class on the second grade to help children at risk, those identified as having social, emotional or economic deprivation.
- Assigning sufficient time for the School Based Support Team (SBST) to engage in preventive therapy.
- Giving regular class teachers access to support services for children identified as having learning/behavior problems.

- Developing a broad guidance plan with a reasonable ratio of guidance counselors to students to permit accountable, effective rather than paper services to youngsters who require them.

HIGH SCHOOLS [27]

Students with handicapping conditions are encouraged to avail themselves of the wide variety of programs in our high schools. Unfortunately, however, not every school can meet the needs of all students. It is suggested, therefore, that five or six schools within a borough or region be provided with added resources to create specialized courses for this population. This concentration of funds and personnel would provide a multi-tiered program of career and college preparation not readily available in other schools and would, therefore, serve, much more effectively many special education students who wish to pursue special areas of interest but could not benefit from existing programs.

Along with the five to six regional centers, there should be one central screening Committee on the Handicapped within the borough. This screening committee would be under the direct supervision of the high school superintendent. All referrals, data collections, and evaluations would be funneled through this borough centralized operation. The borough COH and the five to six special high schools would work closely together in order to see that effective placements are made and/or options created as needed. Of course, if a suitable option is not available, referrals should be made to a COH in another borough.

Again, under the aegis of the borough superintendent, activities such as staff training and curriculum development should be centralized. In addition, a parents' council consisting of parents of special education should act as an advisory group in this area to assist the borough superintendent.

- A network for closer relationships with business must be established to broaden education, job and career options for all students.

ALL LEVELS

- Expand links to the home to educate parents to recognize and accept their overall responsibilities as well as to identify their rights: encourage stricter enforcement of the legal responsibilities of parents for the attendance in school of their minor children.

- Launch a massive media campaign to inform and to involve the whole community - business, industry, parents and legislators - in educational problem solving.

- Conduct longitudinal research to identify:

    - What works?
    - What doesn't work?
    - Collect data on areas such as:
        - Implementation of the experimental 200.6 regulations
        - Categorical and noncategorical approaches for selected students.
        - Effective prevention strategies such as family-school teams.
        - Ways to motivate greater parental participation in the Individual Education Plan process.
        - How to impact the formation of education policy.
        - Strategies to motivate students to participate more effectively in their own education.
        - Criteria to use in judging educational success.

- Career competencies: specificity and direction.
- Effective teaching practices.
- Assessment and decision making.
- Exit testing.
- Technology and the handicapped.

- Implement an intensive and sustained staff development program.

- Develop respect and confidence in the plan by providing for periodic assessment, re-examination and correction of direction.

MODELS

Despite the pervading problems in special education, there are pockets of excellence, programs which are functioning well and might serve as the basis of study for possible replication. Examples of some of these programs are the following:

- Kennedy Center Preschool Program

- United Cerebral Palsy Preschool Program

- P.S. 47 M Preschool for Deaf Infants

- P.S. 106 X - Comprehensive Prevention and School-Family Program

- P.S. 69 R - Mainstreaming Conferencing and Placement Program

- I.S. 237 Q - Integration of Regular and Special Education

- Edward R. Morrow High School - Comprehensive Regular and Special Education Program on the secondary level

- Centers for the Multiple Handicapped - partnership with health agencies
- Occupational Training Center R - links with business and the community
- P.S. 37 R, School for the Autistic - located within Psychiatric Medical Center
- Sterling School Brooklyn - strong liaison with community agencies
- P.S. 106 M, Bellevue Psychiatric Hospital School

In summary, a comprehensive long range effort could result in the:

1. Reduction in the flow of students into special education.
2. Increase in the rate of retention of students with learning and behavior problems in regular education classes.
3. Return of more youngsters to regular education classes.
4. Reduction in the overall cost of services.
5. Establishment of criteria so that model programs and services pervade.
6. Greater collaboration and cooperation between regular and special education, paving the way for one effective system for all children according to their needs.
7. Lessening of the tension and stress now permeating the school system.

8. Heightened public confidence in education and in educators.

9. A greater number of children reaching their potential.

Let us reaffirm the right of every handicapped and non-handicapped child in America to a free appropriate education in the least restrictive environment. Helping each child to become a useful productive citizen and to reach his own potential makes good sense fiscally and morally.

Our students cannot continue to be buried in a bureaucratic wasteland.

Let's get started:

Today?

APPENDIX

Public School 106, Bronx Anna Petsche, Principal

The Education of Special Children within a Regular Elementary School Program

A Program Designed to Reduce the Number of Children Placed into Self-contained Special Education Classes

Every child is a "special child" and the elementary school program can provide for the special needs and abilities of each child. Under the leadership of the principal a comprehensive elementary school program is designed which will further those objectives. The basic ingredients include:

- heterogeneus grouping
- a well trained staff
- established policies and procedures
- a friendly environment
- a strong academic program
- aesthetic education and enrichment activities
- identification of children with special needs
- special programs for children with special needs such as gifted and talented, limited English proficiency and learning disabled.
- support staff - guidance counselor, school based support team, health interns, paraprofessionals, volunteers, district office resource staff
- parents as partners in education

Once the program is established and all members of the staff function as expected, the needs of the children are assessed and programs are designed to meet their needs.

The model below is one which has evolved in a non-Chapter I school in the Bronx. The school has a register of 1170 children.

A sequential K-6 program, which incorporates the ingredients listed above is being implemented. Family-school problem solving sessions are among the support services rendered. The model below outlines what should be, as well as what is included at this school.

Funding is limited to what is allocated to any non-Chapter I school. Unfortunately, the support services are too meager to fulfill the ambitions of the program. It is our contention that a modest infusion of resources into this or any K-6 school would relieve the pressure for COH evaluations and the placements into Special Education programs which follow.

THE EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM

KINDERGARTEN

The all day kindergarten program gives the children the opportunity to acquire knowledges and skills in an unhurried, pleasant environment. Children who manifest developmental lags have time to catch up. Parent volunteers are trained to provide special exercises designed to help children overcome motor, perceptual or other skills deficits. Non-English speaking children of Hispanic background are given ESL instruction by a trained bilingual educational assistant under a Title VII program. The very nature of the kindergarten program in its totality provides for the normal and wholesome growth for the majority of the children. Any child who, from the observation of the trained early childhood teacher over a period of time, manifests severe emotional or learning problems is referred to the guidance counselor. The counselor comes in to observe the child and makes recommendations to the teacher. Usually a group conference involving the child, the teacher, the parent, the counselor and a supervisor is convened and consensus is reached as to how all persons involved can work together to help the child adjust to the school situation. Sometimes referral to COH is recommended

because the resources of the classroom are insufficient in dealing with a child's inability to cope. The parent is given time to think about the options and additional conferences with the teacher and/or counselor may take place.

All kindergarten children are tested for handicapping conditions or for giftedness under the Chapter 53 Screening Program. The Dial Test is used. The results, as well as teacher judgement, often superior, are used in planning for each child's development. At the end of the year, usually all children are promoted to the first grade with a minimal number having been referred to COH for evaluation.

GRADE 1

The children are grouped heterogeneously in classes of twenty-five (25) pupils each. In making the assignments, an attempt is made to match the needs of the children with the strenghts of the teachers. The first grade teacher uses learning centers and groups children for reading according to level. Music, dance, art and field trip experiences enrich the curriculum and promote wholesome emotional and social growth.

Children who have been identified by the Dial Test in kindergarten as having deficits in two of the areas tested participate in special activities with a trained educational assistant under the PEG (Prevention in the Early Grades) Program, a program co-sponsored by the District and the Special Education Division. Other services to meet special needs include ESL and Resource Room. The guidance counselor works with teachers, children and parents as she does in the kindergarten. Families of children with excessive absence are sought out for special attention and counseling.

At the end of the first grade year those children who have not mastered the primer level in reading are retained in the first grade so that they will get the firm foundation in the fundamental skills needed for success in later grades. The few children who are referred to COH are those who manifest obvious learning disabilities.

GRADE 2

A transitional class consisting of second grade holdovers and new second graders whose achievements have been marginal is formed. The register is limited to twenty (20) children and the teacher is selected for her strength, her compassion and her superior teaching techniques.

All of the other children are grouped heterogeneously. They receive a strong academic program with many enrichment activities. Support services include Resource Room, ESL, PSEN reading and speech therapy as needed. The guidance counselor plays an important role again as needs are detected and family-school problem solving sessions continue to play a therapeutic role and help to prevent referral for Special Education placement. Referrals to COH are usually for those children whose overwhelming problems have not been ameliorated by the school program.

THE MIDDLE GRADES

GRADE 3

All pupils are placed into regular, heterogeneously organized classes with maximum registers of thirty-two (32). There is no special class on the grade because all children should be given the chance to "make it" in the regular program. A strong academic program, supplemented by field trips and other enriching experiences, is implemented. The same support services as offered in previous grades are offered to those

children who need them. Formal assemblies are introduced and each class stages a performance in the auditorium. Referrals to COH are kept to a minimum.

GRADE 4

A "Gates" class consisting of children who have not been promoted because of severe reading retardation is formed. The register is limited to twenty (20) children and the teacher is selected for her special competence in techniques as well as for her compassion and her ability to motivate "reluctant learners". All of the other children are heterogeneously grouped and receive an excellent instructional program, basic with enrichment, as well as the support services as needed by individual children. Children who manifest superior ability are placed into the TAG (Talented and Gifted) Program where they spend several periods a week on special projects. All children are given a music program in which they learn how to play the song flute. Referrals to COH are mainly for new admissions to the school who exhibit serious academic retardation and for those few children who have not benefited from the regular school program.

THE UPPER ELEMENTARY GRADES

GRADES 5 and 6

There are no more special classes, just special services for individual children. Approximately 10% of the children are receiving Resource Room service and 10% are in the TAG program. A club program consisting of sixteen (16) different activities from which children may choose is offered once a week. In addition, some children are learning how to type and how to use computers. Career education programs are introduced in the assembly. Children also have the opportunity to participate in ego building activities such as the student council or in various service activities. Referrals to COH have become almost unnecessary.

SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED AND/OR NEEDED

THE SCHOOL GUIDANCE PROGRAM

The School Based Support Team (SBST) plays an indispensable role in helping children to function successfully in the mainstream through counseling of children, family-school problem solving sessions and consultant service to teachers and administrators. It is urgent that the guidance aspect of this service be expanded so that the time spent in formal assessment of children with the consequent placement of children into Special Education program be reduced. Consultant services from such agencies as the Ackerman Institute of Family Therapy should be included in the budget for a district. Family-school problem solving sessions have been found to be an effective device for helping to keep children functioning in the mainstream.

RESOURCE ROOM

Approximately seventy five (75) children are serviced in four Resource Rooms in groups of five each for a one hour daily period. Each child's specific learning disability is addressed. Those children whose IEP (Individual Education Plan) specifies it, receive counseling as well. The program is invaluable since it permits children to remain in the mainstream while addressing their specific learning and emotional needs. An expansion of this program would permit more children to remain in the mainstream.

SPEECH THERAPY

This program is limited to too few children, servicing as it does, mostly Special Education children whose IEP's mandate this service. It should be expanded and the involved and expensive COH referral process should be limited to the evaluation needed to substantiate the need for speech therapy.

PSEN READING

Two licensed reading teachers provide intensive and additional reading instruction to approximately one hundred twenty (120) children in groups of 12-15 children each. The participants are those children exclusive of Resource Room, ESL, Transitional Class and Gates Class participants, who are the lowest achievers in reading on grades 2 - 6.

PSEN MATHEMATICS

This program services approximately eighty (80) children who scored at or below the 20th percentil on the LAB (Language Assessment Battery) receive ESL service in consonnance with the Aspira Consent Decree and Lau Decision. ESL services are provided by a part time ESL teacher (3 days per week) funded under Title VII and city tax levy, a bilingual Spanish paraprofessional, funded under a Title VII grant and three classroom teachers being trained under a Title VII grant. Recently the services of a three day/week Vietnamese paraprofessional and a two day/week Cambodian paraprofessional have been added.

PREVENTION IN THE EARLY GRADES (PEG)

This program is designed to prevent the placement of children into Special Education programs through early intervention. The target children are first graders who score below minimum competency on two parts of the Dial Test administered in kindergarten and those children observed by their teachers as having developmental lags. A paraprofessional, trained by a teacher trainer who is an experienced Special Education teacher, engages small groups of children in exercises to remediate deficiencies in such areas as fine motor skills, gross motor skills, auditory perception skills or expressive language skills. About thirty (30) children are serviced. The program is sponsored by the District in conjunction with the Special Education Division.

SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

Without volunteers from among the parents and community members the school would not be able to provide for the special needs of individual children, a number of enrichment activities and the friendly atmosphere which is conducive to achieving the educational goals of an inner city school. Volunteers increase achievement through tutorial service in the early childhood grades, increase administrative efficiency through service in the office, assist in the library with the requisitioning and inventory of books and supplies, provide for the security and welfare of children through hall patrol and lunchroom duty, and enrich the curricular offerings through service as typing instruction, computer instruction and involvement in the club program.

BOARD OF EDUCATION RESOURCES

Of inestimable value to the school are the services provided by district office resource staff in the form of consultant services and help for individual teachers most notably in the areas of reading, math, early childhood, ESL and media. Training sessions for teachers and supervisors could be scheduled throughout the year if funding permitted.

BUREAU OF ATTENDANCE

This should be expanded and include stricter enforcement of the legal responsibilities of parents for the attendance in school of their minor children.

SPECIAL PROGRAMS

Each individual child, teacher, group, participates in something "special" in an attempt to develop individual talents and abilities, to promote feelings of self-worth, to provide a feeling of belonging to a group - class, grade, school, and not least importantly, to stimulate intellectual creativity and achievement. Special programs are instituted through teacher, school and district initiative. They include but are not limited to those listed below. Some of the programs are not "special" but reflective of school/district philosophy; some are modest; each serves a purpose.

- Talented and Gifted(TAG)
- Museums Collaborative, Inc.
- Lincoln Center Program
- Latin Cornerstone Project
- Pediatricians and Teachers as Partners (PTP)
- Marine Mobile
- Windows on Wildlife
- Planetarium Programs
- Meteorology Project
- Teaching Reading in the Content Areas (TRICA)
- Prep for Prep (out of school program)
- Parents as Reading Partners
- Introduction to Computers
- Typing
- Greenhouse
- School Magazine
- Student Council
- Club Program
- Assembly Programs
- Field Trips
- Filmed Learnings Add Meaningful Experiences (FLAME)
- Young Audiences
- AAA Safety Patrols
- Basketball Team
- Cheer Leaders
- School Volunteers

RECOMMENDATIONS

In order for a program which aims to have all of its "special" children succeed in the mainstream with a concomitant reduction in the number of placements into self-contained Special Education classes we will need:

1. A strong early childhood program with the following features:

   1.1. All day kindergarten with a paraprofessional assigned to each class of twenty five (25) children.

   1.2. Each first grade class with a minimum register of twenty five (25).

   1.3. A transitional class on the second grade which will help each child to overcome the handicaps imposed by social, emotional and economic deprivation.

2. An effective support system which will provide services according to need.

   2.1. A School Based Support Team (SBST) which has sufficient time to engage in preventive therapy.

   2.2. A schedule of family school problem solving sessions which help all parties involved with a child in dealing constructively with the needs/problems of the child with the goal of maintaining that child in the mainstream.

   2.3. Adequate services to remediate the problems of underachievers in reading, math and English language proficiency.

2.4. A program which stresses academic excellence with opportunities for talented and gifted students as well as cultural enrichment for all.

2.5. An opportunity midway (Grade 4) to assess progress and needs and to provide "catch-up" through a "Gates" type program for those children who have not kept pace with N.Y.S.E.D. requirements.

3. A publicly supported program of intensive training for teachers and supervisors.

CONCLUSION

An inner-city, non-Chapter I school can prevent the placement of an inordinate number of children into self-contained Special Education classes if it is given 1) effective leadership, 2) sufficient support services, and 3) effective training for teachers and supervisors.

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